



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF  
HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE  
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229220



## **FACT SHEET**

### **Health and Safety Issues at the Jewett White Lead Site And Veterans Park in Port Richmond, Staten Island**

#### **What is the Jewett White Lead Site?**

- The Jewett White Lead site, an empty lot located at 2000 Richmond Terrace in the Port Richmond area of Staten Island, was used to manufacture white lead during the 1800s and early 1900s. White lead was an ingredient in lead paint.
- The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently found very high lead levels in the soil at the site. EPA found levels as high as 37,100 parts per million (ppm) in the surface soil on the site and 2,760 ppm in the surface soil on the sidewalk and street gutter outside the site.

#### **What is being done about the Jewett White Lead Site?**

- EPA is overseeing clean up of the site.
- The property owner's contractors have repaired fencing on the site, marked it with warning signs, and taken steps to keep soil from spreading away from the site with EPA oversight.
- EPA is currently assessing lead contamination of the surrounding areas related to the Jewett White Lead site.

#### **What is lead?**

- Lead is a poisonous metal that was once widely used in paint and gasoline. As a result, it can still be found in soil and dust.
- New York City banned the use of lead paint for houses in 1960. EPA started eliminating lead from gasoline in 1973. It was banned entirely in 1996.
- Lead can also be found in certain products made in other countries.

#### **How can lead affect health?**

- Peeling lead paint turns into lead dust. Children can swallow lead dust when they play on the floor and put their hands or toys in their mouths.
- Lead is harmful when swallowed or inhaled and small doses can build up in the body over time. Lead poisoning is defined as 10 or more micrograms of lead per deciliter of blood (10 µg/dL).
- Lead poisoning is especially dangerous for young children because it can cause learning and behavior problems.

### **What are the main causes of childhood lead poisoning?**

- Although soil may contain lead, the main cause of childhood lead poisoning in Staten Island and throughout New York City is lead paint in housing. Older housing with peeling and chipping paint is especially a problem.
- Children can also be exposed to lead from imported products such as imported pottery, cosmetics, and health remedies.

### **Has lead from the Jewett White Lead site affected children living nearby?**

- The Health Department receives results of all blood-lead tests for residents of New York City.
- The Port Richmond and Stapleton-Saint George areas of Staten Island have high rates of lead poisoning. These areas have older, poorly maintained housing and high rates of poverty.
- The Health Department reviewed blood-lead test results for children living near the Jewett site. The review did not show an increased risk of lead poisoning among children living near the site.

### **Can children be exposed to lead from the Jewett White Lead site?**

- Parents should keep children away from this site.
- Children can swallow lead in soil if they put their hands in their mouth after playing on the site or in areas where soil from the site may have moved. Lead from outdoors can also be brought into the home on shoes.

### **Information on Veterans Park**

EPA tested soil at Veterans Park in order to compare contamination levels with those seen at the Jewett site. Lead levels were much lower in the park than at the Jewett site, but one of two surface samples had slightly elevated levels of lead and arsenic.

- This sample, taken from a planting area under mulch, contained 406 ppm of lead and 52 ppm of arsenic. The recommended upper limit for lead is 400 ppm in bare soil in children's play areas. Arsenic in bare soil should not exceed 16 to 20 ppm, the upper limit of levels seen in rural areas of New York State and New Jersey.

### **What is being done about the lead and arsenic at Veterans Park?**

- The Parks Department collected 12 additional soil samples in Veterans Park to determine lead and arsenic levels throughout the park. The results for lead were all below the recommended soil limit of 400 ppm and ranged from 200-396 ppm. Arsenic levels ranged from 7-50 ppm. Nine of the twelve arsenic results were greater than the 16 ppm limit.

The best way to prevent exposure to lead and arsenic in the park is to keep the soil covered. The park is mostly covered with grass or paved walkways. As a temporary measure, the Parks Department has covered the bare soil areas with wood chips to minimize people's exposure to soil. The Parks Department is checking daily to make sure coverage is intact. As a long term solution, the Parks Department will replace the wood chips with grass, shrubs and ground covers. Where appropriate, the Parks Department will use landscape fabric to limit contact with the bare soil.

### **How did arsenic and lead get into the soil at Veterans Park?**

- The sources of contamination are unknown.
- In the past, arsenic and lead were used in pesticides. Arsenic was also used to treat wood.
- Arsenic also occurs naturally in soil and small amounts can be found in food, especially seafood.

### **How can arsenic affect health?**

- Occasional contact with low levels of arsenic is unlikely to affect health.
- People who regularly ingest small amounts of arsenic for many years may have increased cancer risks. Long-term arsenic exposure can also cause changes in skin color or small, dark skin growths, especially in the palms of hands and soles of feet.

### **How can children be exposed to arsenic?**

- Children can swallow arsenic when they play in bare soil and then put their hands in their mouths.

## **What Families Need to Know about Preventing Lead Poisoning**

### **What can I do to protect my family?**

- Keep children away from the Jewett White Lead Site.
- Wash children's hands often, especially after they play outside and before they eat.
- Ask your landlord to fix peeling paint in your home. Call 311 if your landlord doesn't fix peeling paint.
- Clean floors, windowsills, and dusty places in your home with wet mops and wet cloths.

### **Should I have my children tested for arsenic and lead?**

- Make sure children get a blood lead test at 1 and 2 years of age, as required by law. Talk to your doctor about testing older children.
- Although tests for arsenic are available, exposure is unlikely and testing is not recommended for children who played in Veterans Park.

### **Where can I get a blood lead test for me or my child?**

- Your doctor can give you or your child a blood-lead test.
- If you or your child don't have a doctor, call 311 and ask for the Lead Poisoning Prevention Program. The operator will help you find a place where you or your child can get tested, get medical insurance, and find a regular doctor.
- Services are available regardless of your immigration status or ability to pay.

### **How can I get more information?**

- Call 311.
- Go to <http://www.nyc.gov/health> for updates and information.
- Speak to your doctor if you have questions or concerns about your health.